

**URGENT – URGENT – URGENT – URGENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**The Minister of Labor issues decrees facilitating the right to work
for spouses and children of Lebanese women:**

A beginning of a citizenship spring?

**A press release
28 September 2011**

In an unprecedented step towards challenging discrimination against women, especially in Lebanon, the current Minister of Labor, Charbel Nahhas, announced during a Press Conference held on September 27th a series of reforms which were introduced on a number of clauses of the labor laws, aiming to eliminate various forms of discrimination and injustice against non-Lebanese children and spouses of Lebanese women.

The Minister indicated that he has taken these steps in order to address what he has described as an unacceptable situation whereby non-national spouses and children of Lebanese women are treated as any foreigner. This, according to the Minister, is unjust since *“spouses and children of Lebanese women are intimately linked to Lebanon in view of the kinship relation and, as such, are entitled to fundamental rights namely the residence to right and work”*.

As such, the Ministry of Labor has introduced radical changes on the law namely granting work permits to children and spouses of Lebanese women which are not

limited to occupations allowed to foreigners, simplifying the administrative procedures as well as allowing employers of spouses and children of Lebanese women to reclaim bank guarantees (amounting to 1.5 million LBP per person) previously blocked for that purpose.

The Minister has also sent an official request to the Cabinet requesting the inclusion of a specific clause in the finance law waiving the fees needed for issuing a work permit as well as a pre-work permit approval for all children and spouses of Lebanese women (effective one year after the official marriage registration for the spouses).

The **“My Nationality is a Right for me and my Family Campaign”**, which was invited by the Office of the Minister to attend the Press Conference, would like to express its support to Minister Nahhas’ initiative, especially since the initiative has been formulated within a human rights framework, as expressed by the Minister, who indicated that *“out of respect to human rights and to women’s rights, spouses and children of Lebanese women are intimately linked with one half of the Lebanese society and it is the duty of the state to provide for their rights and needs. The Ministry of Labor found it appropriate to alleviate their financial burden through waiving work permit fees normally requested from foreigners”*.

This logic and approach based on the fundamentals of human rights is a strong base for addressing all social issues and ought to be consecrated fully through an overall reform of the current discriminatory nationality laws, in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

The **“My Nationality is a Right for me and my Family Campaign”** will be closely following the implementation of these new measures with the Ministry and will ensure that information about the implementation mechanisms are widely disseminated. The Campaign is also ready to support the efforts of Minister Nahhas to regularize the situation of Lebanese women and their spouses and children. In addition, the Campaign will also be following up the fate of the law petition submitted on the 27th of July to the office of Prime Minister Mikati to ensure equality amongst women and men, as well as women’s full citizenship rights in Lebanon.

“My Nationality is a Right for me and my Family Campaign”

Beirut, 28 September 2011